

## **Economic Development Committee Initial Recommendations December, 2010**

After several meetings of the Economic Development Committee appointed by the Madison Board of Supervisors, the committee determined that we should divide our focus between current business and how they can be properly assisted and long term growth for the county. For clarity we restated the goal of the Committee: To make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors that would make the County more business friendly.

All of our initial meetings have focused on how the current environment helps or hinders existing businesses and those wishing to do business within Madison County. It is our feeling that the County should look at all areas to improve Economic Development within the County. These areas include a Vision, planning, sound comprehensive plan, development of a policy, zoning ordinance, and site plan process. The committee, however, decided to focus first on the zoning ordinance which could have a more direct impact on current businesses within the County.

Additionally, we have heard from several community members regarding their experiences in trying to expand or start a business within the county. This prompted us to reach out to the community and seek their input through a survey. This survey has been distributed via the Madison Chamber of Commerce and is posted on both the Chamber website and the County website. A summary of the results of this survey are attached to this report.

One of meetings of the committee was attended by members of the regional Virginia Department of Transportation and Ms. Antonucci, a transportation consultant familiar with VDOT ordinances and regulations. After this meeting, the committee evaluated the Madison County Zoning Ordinances dated July 7, 2010. Based upon the meeting with VDOT and Ms. Antonucci, and our review of the Ordinances, we are making the following recommendations for your consideration.

- To remove in all zoning categories that VDOT approval is required before the project is sent to the Planning Commission and BoS. Change the wording to obtain VDOT recommendations for the project. The business will be required to work with VDOT in getting their permit. VDOT permitting should not hold up the County approval of a project.
- Every zoning category has a list of business applications that have either been approved under By Right or for Special permit uses. For example Article 3 C-1 under special permit uses lists general store, golf course, restaurant and Country Club to mention a few which should be zoned as a business B-1. Since all potential types of business can not be listed under special permit uses it is confusing to the business owner as to how to proceed to expand or create a new business. Therefore, to simplify and make the zoning more business friendly, two

recommendations are made to correct this area: First is to eliminate the Special Use list under each zoning category and have only a By Right list. Second is to evaluate current incorrectly zoned areas and make corrections at no cost to the owner. For example, businesses that are operating as a retail establishment in an agricultural zoned area, would become zoned retail.

- All listings that are designated Special Use should be moved to By Right if one of these business categories has already been approved under the Special Use method. Businesses so changed shall be grandfathered for taxing reasons until such time as the property changes hands for the same usage. This does not eliminate the Special Use application process. See further clarification below.
- When a site is permitted through the Special Use method, that said site is the given a By Right designation for the property for like uses by successors owning the property.
- Any use not permitted By Right will require a Special Use permit.
- Approval of an indefinite use of a Special Use Permit should be eliminated. Any approval by a Special Use Permit should be short in duration and the requestor encouraged to seek a proper zoning category through tax categorization. We recommend that any Special Use Permit be for no more than 5 years at which time the owner can apply for an extension. If owner does not wish to apply for proper rezoning after the 5 year interval, then he must pay fee and apply for an additional 5 year Special Use Permit. Only one renewal allowed per applicant.

Numerous citizens approached the committee regarding what they feel is an unfriendly business attitude within the county. Therefore, the committee recommends that the county engage a proper consultant to provide customer service training to all county employees that may come into contact with the community. Ideally, this training should be conducted over the course of several weeks to cover topics such as communication, knowing your customer and their needs, handling irritated clients, etc. Such training should cost approximately \$100 per hour less any materials needed.

In addition to these recommendations, the committee is still engaged in trying to simplify the application process so it is more manageable and user friendly. We hope to have an outline of our recommendations to the Board by the end of January.

Our next task is to provide recommendations to the Board regarding long term economic development considerations. These recommendations will take some additional time to develop so that we can make sure that our proposals are in line with the Comprehensive Plan of the County, take into account the wishes of the citizens of the county, and balance revenue generation, the culture of the county, and unintended growth. Therefore, we ask for an extension of our charter for an additional six months or until the end of June, 2011.